



Resources for Child Caring

Raising the standard of care for children

Helping Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten

Developed for the 'School Readiness Program/Blast Off to Kindergarten by the Saint Paul Public Schools in July 2007.
Adapted from *Kindergarten Readiness: South Washington County Schools*.

Kindergarten children come to school with very different backgrounds and personalities. Certain characteristics are often shared, despite this diversity. The following list of skills is a guideline for parents who may be interested in knowing how to help prepare their children for kindergarten.

Personal and Social Development

Personal development is how children feel about themselves (self concept) and their ability to understand and express their own feelings and the feelings of other people.

Social development is the child's ability to interact with others (both children and adults,) their ability to make friends, solve conflicts and function well in groups.

Personal and Social Skills

You Help Me Get Ready for Kindergarten When You ...

- ◆ Show me how to follow simple rules and routines.
- ◆ Provide a daily routine that includes regular times for meals and washing hands before meals.
- ◆ Establish a bedtime routine that includes reading to me or telling me a story and gives me eight or more hours of sleep at night.
- ◆ Provide structure around clean-up with rules like "All the toys should be put away before dinner."
- ◆ Divide big tasks into smaller parts: "Let's pick up all the blocks first."
- ◆ Set a few rules and make sure they are understood. For example: no hurting people with words or actions, stay in the yard, be gentle with things. Explain the reasons for limits with sentences like these: "Play with the ball outside, not inside, because something might get broken."
- ◆ Encourage my interest in learning new things.
- ◆ Provide toys and household objects that can be used in more than one way, so I can decide how to use them; e.g., play dough, cereal boxes, egg cartons, flashlights or dress up clothes.

Helping Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten Personal and Social Skills, continued

- ◆ Take me to new places, such as a park, library, post office or the grocery store.
- ◆ Encourage me to ask adults for help when needed.
- ◆ Give me opportunities to ask for help and suggest words to use: “I need help with...”
- ◆ Play games with me (Hide and Seek, I Spy, Memory, Dominoes, basic card and computer games, etc.). Practice taking turns while playing a game.
- ◆ Encourage me to help other children. Teach me to share by taking turns with toys or trading them and offering snacks to other children before I take my snack.
- ◆ Encourage me to take turns talking and listening to others talk about the day, something new that was discovered, an upcoming event or a special experience.
- ◆ Encourage me to use words to solve conflicts. Give me words to use when conflicts occur, e.g., “Please stop,” “I don’t like that,” or “May I play with that toy when you are done?”

Language and Reading Skills

Language and reading skills include listening, speaking, writing and enjoying books.

You Help Me Get Ready for Kindergarten When You...

- ◆ Encourage my interest in books and listening to an adult read or tell stories.
- ◆ Read to me or tell me stories every day and talk with me about the pictures and the stories.
- ◆ Let me hold the book and turn the pages.
- ◆ Ask me questions about what I think will happen in the story.
- ◆ Listen as I re-tell parts or all of a story. Once I know the story well, ask me to tell you the story.
- ◆ Let me make my own storybook. I can draw pictures and you can write down what I tell you about the pictures.
- ◆ See that I know the names of some letters, especially those in my own name, and can copy or write my name.
- ◆ Point out letters and words to me when reading or when we are driving in the car, at the store or taking a walk.
- ◆ Let me see you writing (names, phone numbers, grocery lists, recipes, notes, etc.)
- ◆ Let me see what my name looks like in print and encourage me to copy it or trace over the letters. Let me cut letters out of magazines to spell my name.

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Helping Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten Language and Reading Skills, continued

- ◆ Make letters or letter-like signs for letters or words.
- ◆ Give me pencils, markers or crayons and paper, and encourage me to draw, scribble or write letters, words or pictures, expressing my ideas.
- ◆ Make labels for the home to help connect names of things with words in print. For example, write the word “chair” on a piece of paper and tape it to the chair.
- ◆ As you read or tell me stories, point out new words and explain their meaning.
- ◆ Use new words every day when talking to me. (Meal times are great for conversation.)
- ◆ Help me recognize different sounds in rhymes and familiar words by reading nursery rhymes or other rhyming books. Sing songs with me.
- ◆ Help me hear how certain sounds are alike and others are different. For example, say two words that sound the same (cat; sat) and say two words that sound different (big; bat, or house; horse).
- ◆ Play rhyming games with me like “What rhymes with ... bat? (cat) hot? (pot) king? (ring), etc.
- ◆ Talk about the names of letters and their sounds. Ask me “What other words start with the “S “ sound?” (Sam, sand, sun)
- ◆ Take a walk outside to identify sounds. Listen for different birds, rustling leaves and city sounds like car horns, people talking or airplanes flying. Ask me to draw pictures of the things we hear.

Math Skills

Math skills focus on children’s thinking and problem solving.

You Help Me Get Ready for Kindergarten When You...

- ◆ Help me understand numbers and amounts.
- ◆ Sort by objects or color, using the family laundry (all of the underwear, socks, shirts and pants in different piles.) Which items do we have the most of, least of?
- ◆ Use words like big and little, more and less, first and last, full and empty.
- ◆ Count with me: the number of people in the family, number of girls, number of boys, number of plates, bowls, cups, spoons.
- ◆ Ask questions at meal times like, Who has more rice? Who is older? Who is younger? Who is taller? Who is shorter?



Helping Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten

Math Skills, continued

- ◆ Look for and notice numbers in the environment. Figure out the neighborhood by noticing which trees are big and which are small, the number of windows on buildings and how many different colors of flowers there are.
- ◆ Count in order from 1 to 10. Count anything aloud together. Count the days on the calendar, dinner plates, silverware, stairs or the number of crackers in a snack.
- ◆ Encourage me to recognize and copy simple patterns.
- ◆ Point out patterns that you see in books, on clothing, or on street signs (“Stop” sign or “No Parking” sign.)
- ◆ Play matching games with socks or shoes (for children and adults) or match forks and spoons when setting the table.
- ◆ Help me learn to listen to and repeat sound patterns. For example: Clap a pattern (2 quick, 1 slow; 1 hand clap, 2 lap claps; or 1 loud clap and 2 soft claps) and help me to clap your pattern along with you.
- ◆ Talk about the order in which you do activities: 1) brush teeth, 2) wash face, 3) comb hair, 4) get dressed, 5) put on socks and shoes.
- ◆ Help me identify and name basic shapes.
- ◆ Show and tell me the names for shapes: circle, triangle, square and rectangle.
- ◆ Find something shaped like a triangle, circle, square, etc. (for example, traffic signs: yield is a triangle, highway signs are rectangles, stop signs are octagons.)
- ◆ Play the “I Spy Shapes” game: take turns with me saying: “I spy with my little eye a _____ (triangle, square, etc)” and take turns guessing the item I see with that shape.

Physical Development and Health

Large motor skills: Children develop control of the large muscles in their arms and legs, which help them move their bodies with control, balance and coordination.

Fine (small) motor skills: Children starting Kindergarten should have the ability to control the small muscles in their hands and fingers. Developing strong fine motor skills helps children to learn how to hold a pencil, cut with scissors and use a paintbrush.

Physical Health and Self Care Skills: Children’s health and ability to perform self-care tasks independently are important for school readiness.



Helping Your Child Get Ready for Kindergarten Physical Development and Health, continued

You Help Me Get Ready for Kindergarten When You...

- ◆ Give me plenty of opportunities to run, jump, climb and hop.
- ◆ Bring me to a playground with safe climbing equipment.
- ◆ Play “Follow the Leader” outside and run, walk and hop.
- ◆ Draw hopscotch on the sidewalk. Teach me to write the numbers in the squares and how to jump or hop from number to number.
- ◆ Help me learn to throw, bounce, catch and kick a ball.
- ◆ Play catch with me; start with larger balls and move to smaller ones as skills develop.
- ◆ Play kickball or soccer with me.
- ◆ Help me gain control in holding a pencil or other writing tools.
- ◆ Provide experiences to strengthen small muscles like buttoning and zipping clothes, lacing and unlacing shoes, squeezing toothpaste onto the toothbrush, opening jars of food and putting a key into the lock.
- ◆ Practice cutting with scissors. Start by cutting paper, play dough, straws, or index cards. Show me how to hold scissors correctly, with my thumb on top. Put a small piece of tape on the top blade so I see the tape when I cut.
- ◆ Let me paint with a large paintbrush and water outdoors.
- ◆ Give me crayons, pencils and markers to write, draw or scribble with. Let me paint with watercolors. Create collages with flour paste and household items such as yarn, colored paper, leaves and sticks to craft beautiful designs on paper.
- ◆ Teach me to dress, eat, use the toilet and wash my hands.
- ◆ Teach me to wash my hands after going to the bathroom and before eating.
- ◆ Let me practice zipping, buttoning and snapping as I get dressed.
- ◆ Teach me to use the bathroom without assistance.
- ◆ Help me wear clothes that are appropriate for indoors and outdoor weather.
- ◆ Teach me to put my outdoor clothing on indoors.

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